

## “Mythical origins of Cervantes’s friendships: value and use of friends in the *Novelas ejemplares*”

Cervantes did not set out to write a treatise on friendship in the *Novelas ejemplares* but the prevalence of the presence of pairs of characters and particularly, pairs of friends, has not gone unnoticed. Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce (1975) looked at Cervantes’s use of friends in *La Galatea* and he wrote on the tradition of the two friends which has its origins in the myth of Damon and Pythias: they symbolise trust, loyalty and true friendship as one of the friends is prepared to die for the other. Cervantes presents ideal friends in more ordinary contexts and offers an almost subversive adaptation of this myth in *El curioso impertinente*. In the *Novelas ejemplares* Cervantes has recourse to friendship to provide duality of characters and therefore of point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Avalle-Arce also adds that we need to find the exemplarity of the *Novelas ejemplares*, not only in the morality of the stories, which is not always clear, but also in the artistic sense: ‘Son *ejemplares*, evidentemente, porque pueden servir de ejemplo y modelo a las nuevas generaciones artísticas españolas’ (I, 17). They were certainly the first *novelas* of this type, and in this respect, they are the only model to be followed at that time (I, 18).

These are the aspects which I intend to explore and extend the study to other *novelas* which have not been included in previous discussions on friendship. The aim is to provide a more wide-ranging understanding of friendship in the collection. Firstly, friendship appears in the *Novelas* with some specific features and a strong moral value representing loyalty, generosity and reciprocity mirroring the mythical classical tradition of ideal friendships. Secondly, friendship is a literary technique, a tool to provide various points of view, to create suspense, complicate the plot and reflect on the making of literature itself.

On the thematic level, we can identify some common characteristics that appear repeatedly when friends come onto the scene. These characteristics can be placed in the context of classical and Renaissance thinking on this subject. Friendship was greatly valued by the classics. In the *Iliad*, Achilles and Patroclus appear as a mythical model of true friendship. In the philosophical plane, Plato examined the theme of friendship in *Lysis* (1902) stressing the mutual character of the relationship. Love of a friend has to be returned with specific deeds of service, for it is in this way that love is manifested.

Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1955) defines the friend as ‘another-self’, a true society where man is in the same relationship with respect to the friend. He

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<sup>1</sup> *Novelas ejemplares* (Madrid: Castalia, 1987). Quotations from *Novelas ejemplares* in this article are taken from this edition. Volume and page are indicated in parenthesis from now on.

maintains that to establish a close friendship it is necessary to share in the life of the other by dialogue, having goals in common and sharing interests or certain qualities for friendship is an expression of community. This coexistence is achieved through living with and talking to the friend so that they can both exchange thoughts and get to know each other. Aristotle also saw different types of friendly relationships. He states that, in most cases, friendships arise as a result of some interest or need (friendship of interest). The highest form of friendship is based on virtue and it originates out of goodness without seeking pleasure or utility. This form of friendship is exemplary and permanent: 'It is those who desire the good of their friends for their friends' sake who are most completely friends, since each loves the other for what the other is in himself and not for something he has about him which he need not have' (1955: 233). Finally, for friendship to last, loyalty and trust is needed to preserve friendship as otherwise there is a lack of virtue. Friends thus warn and give advice to each other if they see they are falling into error.

Cicero in his dialogue *De Amicitia* (1971) confirms these principles. Cicero's works were widely read in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance making these ideas available to a large audience. He affirms that virtue creates and preserves friendship. In friendship there is a sharing in prosperity and adversity and a consequence of this is the importance of warning and giving advice to the friend if he goes astray.

In the Middle Ages, Christianity modified and developed the prevailing conception of friendship elevating it to a supernatural level, postulating precepts such as loving one's enemy and the possibility of establishing a personal friendship with God. Charity will become the ideal of love towards others to be followed by a Christian. The idea of fraternity was developed and confused with friendship. However, St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between charity and friendship.

In the Renaissance, Luis Vives, for example, considers the social implications of friendship, and taking classical concepts, conceives friendship as requited love, a friend being part of oneself. He also confirms that either affinity or a common interest binds people together as friends: 'Así sucede que, a menudo, hombres de muy diversos ingenios y con una constitución corporal absolutamente contraria, sostienen mutua amistad firmísima' (1916: 196). It is against this context that we can look at the way Cervantes presents friends in the *Novelas ejemplares*.

The first thing that can be stated with regards *Novelas ejemplares* is that, with the exception of *La española inglesa*, some reference to friends can be found in all of the short stories.

We can begin with *La ilustre fregona* which is mainly a love story and yet, Carriazo and Avendaño are one of the most representative pairs of friends in the collection. They are both of noble origin, belonging to two well-established families in Burgos. Thus, they have in common their social class, cultural environment and geographical context. All these common features will suggest a natural affinity that will lead to

friendship. Cervantes explains that they are also of the same age and lived in the same area: 'Por ser ambos de una misma edad y vecinos, trabó y confirmó una amistad estrechísima' (III, 50).

They behave according to classical principles as good friends, trusting each other and supporting each other with help and advice. Carriazo is initially the one who takes the lead: he went to the tunny fisheries on his own and enjoyed the free life there. On his return home for a short while, he meets his friend Avendaño. Carriazo confides only in his friend Avendaño about his experiences in the tunny fisheries. Not even his family knows about his picaresque life. Avendaño, as a good friend, realises that Carriazo is not happy and he asks why: 'Avendaño, su amigo, viéndole muchas veces melancólico e imaginativo, fiado en su amistad, se atrevió a preguntarle la causa' (III, 50). Cervantes seems to be aware of the mechanisms that rule friendship and makes them explicit, as in this case. Thus, Carriazo does not want to harm their friendship by keeping a secret from him and he tells Avendaño everything: 'No quiso Carriazo tenérsela encubierta, por no hacer agravio a la grande amistad que profesaban' (III, 50). Cicero had said:

Moreover, hypocrisy is not only wicked under all circumstances, because it pollutes truth and takes away the power to discern it, but it is also especially inimical to friendship, since it utterly destroys sincerity, without which the word friendship can have no meaning. (1971: 199)

Avendaño is happy to support his friend and follow him to the tunny fisheries so there is evidence of active help and advice. He leaves everything behind. Friendship becomes more important than family and position. In turn, later on, Carriazo will show his friendship for Avendaño by staying with him in the inn and not leaving him alone. It is therefore natural that when Carriazo is put in prison, Avendaño does not remain indifferent. He intervenes and helps Carriazo. It is clearly a reciprocal, friendly relationship.

There is a similar introduction to the friends in *La señora Cornelia* where Cervantes lists the points in common between Don Juan de Gamboa and Don Antonio de Isunza: 'Caballeros principales, de una edad, muy discretos y grandes amigos' (III, 171). Their initial affinity gets stronger as they take shared decisions and do things together: first they go to Flanders as soldiers, and later they decide to study in Bologna. At this stage, there is no distinction between the two of them. They are both 'liberales y comedidos', 'mozos y alegres' (III, 172).

Following the same principle, Rinconete and Cortadillo stay together when they realise they are in a similar situation. They are both wandering at large without money, and they need to survive: 'Confesemos llanamente que no teníamos blanca, ni aun zapatos' (I, 224). After this realization, they seal their friendship with a warm embrace. Shared poverty and shared freedom are a basis for a friendship here. This

is the link that binds them together, despite other personal characteristics which in other circumstances would keep them apart.

The lack of affinity or common goal fails to create a close friendship in *La gitanilla*, between Andrés Caballero and any of the gypsies of the community. He lives and shares things with them, but there is no personal friendship with any other gypsy. Andrés is a gentleman and the idea of the inherent nature of the nobility is essential to this story. This lack of friendship emphasises a fundamental difference of nature. Robbery and petty crimes are not an aim that he can share. As a consequence, he develops a friendship with Clemente. They come from a different background. Clemente is a page, but in the context of the gypsy community, they are equals and they share a similar aim and amorous feeling. Clemente, in some respects, is also a rival, as he likes Preciosa, but they still have more in common than with the gypsies. Once they leave the gypsy community, they cease to be friends. Clemente disappears from the scene altogether.

Cervantes reflects therefore, the principle that shared personality traits bring about friendships when combined with shared experiences and situations.

In contrast with this, we have the example of Rodolfo in *La fuerza de la sangre*. He has some friends around him but there is no true friendship between them. He does not tell them what he has done to Leocadia. Rodolfo hides his actions from the friends whom he calls *camaradas*: 'Aunque había ido a buscar a sus camaradas, no quiso hallarlas, pareciéndole que no le estaba bien hacer testigos de lo que con aquella doncella había pasado' (II, 154). This reflects the classical idea that when friendship is based on lack of virtue, the friendship cannot last. Cicero explained that friendship was based on virtue and if virtue was forsaken, it was very difficult to preserve that friendship: 'But this very virtue is the parent and preserver of friendship and without virtue friendship cannot exist at all' (1971: 131).

How valuable is friendship in these short stories? Traditionally the *Novelas* have been divided between romance and realist novels: romance stories involving two lovers, their adventures and their final reunion; realist stories set in a context of *pícaros* or low life with little romance. Friendship cuts across this divide and we see the importance attached to friends in both types of stories.

An explicit preference for friendship is expressed in *La señora Cornelia*. Like, Carriazo and Avendaño, the two friends do things together. At the beginning of the story Don Juan wants to go for a walk, which they always do together. That evening, Don Antonio wants to finish his prayers but does not want to stop Don Juan from going out. However, almost as soon as Don Juan has set out, he decides to go back home because he is alone. He does not have company to enjoy his walk with: 'Viéndose solo y que no tenía con quién hablar, determinó volverse a casa' (III, 174). The pleasure of the outing lies on the company rather than in the walk itself.

In *La ilustre fregona*, we are presented with a dilemma of choosing between love and friendship. In a less tragic way than in *El curioso impertinente*, Carriazo and Avendaño put their friendship before what they love more: Avendaño falls madly in love with the kitchen maid in the inn of *El Sevillano* in Toledo and decides to stay there instead of accompanying Carriazo to the tunny fisheries. Carriazo is also curious about Costanza but he already has another ideal in his life which gives him a purpose, the tunny fisheries. This creates an expected tension between the two close friends. Their ideal is not the same any more, and this divergence of aim where there had previously been a shared purpose momentarily separates them. Each attacks the other's object of desire, as if they were trying to destroy what has undermined their friendship. As their attacks are becoming bitter, Carriazo decides to stop the argument and be reconciled with Avendaño so that their friendship is not seriously harmed: 'Quédese aquí nuestra pendencia, y vámonos a dormir, y amanecerá Dios y medraremos' (III, 61).

In the end, Carriazo is the one who decides to stay this time, rather than going on his own to the tunny fisheries. This was the purpose of their journey together, but he is prepared to give it up for the sake of friendship. Cervantes shows Carriazo giving priority to friendship over love. At the end of the story, Avendaño marries Costanza. In this respect, love has succeeded, but if it had not been for friendship, such an outcome would not have taken place. Moreover, this friendship is the instrument that makes possible the reunion of the Carriazo family as Costanza meets her father and her brother.

José Montero Reguera (2005) has tackled the duality of characters in the *Novelas ejemplares* listing the numerous instances of pairs of characters and friends that appear in the short stories and analysing some situations with friends. His main contribution is to suggest that there is some character development with specific characters changing throughout the story and moulding themselves.

In the case of Carriazo and Avendaño, Avendaño develops a more active character and becomes more like Carriazo at the beginning who was the one carrying the action. Carriazo stops being the leading character in favour of Avendaño: 'In this sense, the two protagonists have exchanged character traits' (Montero Reguera, 2005: 296).

This can also be seen in *La gitanilla*: Andrés and Clemente mirror each other, they constitute a double character. Although they are good friends, Clemente serves to trigger the jealous nature of Andrés. Clemente becomes a kind of double to Andrés, whereby the latter can see himself reflected and discover the extent of his own jealousy. Clemente is himself running away from his home and environment because of jealousy. He and his companion did not control their passion and they now suffer the consequences. Andrés, through Clemente, can see the consequences that his behaviour can provoke and thereby improve. In this story, the friendship between Andrés and Clemente serves a psychological purpose and is tightly linked to the

theme of the *novela*. Clemente's role is to contribute to the learning process of Andrés to control his jealousy:

If Juan's double, Clemente, initially has an important role in the development of the theme of the distortion of judgement which produces and is reinforced by the conventional discourse of love, his primary function in the second half of the romance is that of the rival who subjects the protagonist to the trial of jealousy, and, in so doing, exposes the distortion of judgement produced by jealousy. (Forcione, 1982: 149-50)

There are some other stories where a lack of friendship is seen as a handicap and a major error. Cervantes presents people without friends as dysfunctional characters. In particular, Tomás Rodaja and Felipe de Carrizales are the two loners of the *Novelas ejemplares*, and they are both in some way sick and odd. They fail to make friends and this will lead them to make serious errors of judgment and to isolate themselves from the rest of society. Tomás Rodaja meets an army captain at the beginning of the story with whom he fails to strike up a genuine friendship. He travels with the captain to Italy and Flanders but he does not show an interest in the friend's needs or taste. It is not a reciprocal relationship. At the end of the story, when he recovers his sanity, he joins the captain again and it seems that then for the first time he becomes a friend in the full sense of the word, not just his companion or *camarada* as he had been called up to that point. Soon after that Rodaja dies at war.

There are also some examples of what Aristotle would call friendships of interest. These relationships show the differences between a deep and real friendship and one which arises out of a specific need, where there is little genuine concern for the friend:

Thus friends who have been brought together by a feeling that they will profit by their association do not love one another for their personal qualities, but only in so far as they are useful to one another. It is much the same with those whose friendship is inspired by the pleasure they have in each other's society. (1955: 231)

Most examples of this type of friendship are found in the realist stories of the collection where the vices and errors of society are portrayed. Thus, once more, Cervantes reaffirms the value of friendship by showing how it is lacking from social groups or sections of society where there is corruption and evil. In *El casamiento engañoso*, there is an example of abuse of friendship: Doña Estefanía enjoys the trust of Doña Clementa, who allows her free use of her house. Doña Estefanía uses this trust to her own advantage to deceive Campuzano. She pretends to be the owner of the house in order to achieve her personal objective. Doña Clementa is annoyed with such deceit. The dueña Hortigosa confirms this by saying: '¡A fe que se ha ido bien del pie a la mano la señora Estefanía, fiada en la amistad de mi señora!' (III, 229).

One needs to add here that Cervantes introduces many pairs of friends but there are very few female friendships portrayed. In the *Novelas ejemplares* they can be reduced to the above example between Doña Clementa and Doña Estefanía and the relationship between Teodosia and Leocadia in *Las dos doncellas*, which are brought together by circumstances rather than a deep friendship. Friendship is very male orientated in Cervantes which would be a classical trait too. Women were not considered as capable of a true friendship (Hyatte, 1994: 8).

All this comes to confirm that friendship appears in the *Novelas ejemplares* as a highly valued relationship which is a sign of nobility and virtue as defined by classic writers. Friendship is ultimately seen as an expression of all that is best in human beings.

From a literary point of view, what is the use of friendship in Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*? Apart from friendship being highly regarded, why does Cervantes introduce friends in his stories?

In some cases, the friends are a tool to present the main events and develop the structure of the story. The best example of this use can be found in *La señora Cornelia*. Through the actions of the two friends, we come to know the love story of the Duke and Cornelia: Don Juan is given a baby, Don Antonio shelters a lady and Don Juan, in his second outing, defends a man from some attackers. These events are complemented by Cornelia's own account bringing together mother, father and child. It is a complicated structure based on a variety of perspectives offered through the pair of friends (Lacadena, 1976). A similar effect is obtained in *Las dos doncellas* where we also find out about previous events through friendly conversations between the protagonists. Part of the excitement of the story lies in discovering in stages the previous events, which have caused the two female protagonists to end up disguised as men. We are not told by the narrator in a chronological order what has happened. Instead, the *novela* starts after the main events have taken place. Through the meetings of the characters we learn of the events and the plot becomes clear. Again, friendship constitutes an expository technique bringing some entertainment and suspense into the narrative.

In the case of *El amante liberal*, Ricardo and Mahamut appear to have little in common, as one is a Turk, and the other a Christian. As they begin to talk to each other as friends, the reader soon discovers that they have a similar age and background. Their trust and confidence as friends become the driving force of their future action: 'Mahamut serves as catalyst of the narrative, loosening Ricardo's tongue, as it were; a close friend and virtual brother to Ricardo, he becomes his confidante and adviser, to the extent that Ricardo does nothing without first consulting him' (Montero Reguera, 2005: 292). In this *novela* there is a reference to a Turk who is not attracted by the heroine Leonisa. He is in fact satisfied by being given two young males. This reference to homosexual attraction manifests the reality of these relationships in society, but they are not considered under the realm of true

friendship. In the classical tradition the sexual love between men had been included as a low degree of friendship, but not at the level of the ideal or perfect friendship: 'This mixture of desire and need [...] is only the first step which the man must surpass in order to arrive at a higher degree and degrees of love' (Hyatte, 1994: 12). Cervantes, therefore, does not go further in exploring this type of relationship in the *Novelas ejemplares*.

The short stories of *El casamiento engañoso* and *El coloquio de los perros* are constructed on two specific friendships which frame the narrations. The message and the action of the stories are transmitted through conversations between friends: the ensign Campuzano and the licenciado Peralta in the former, and the dogs Cipión and Berganza in the latter. Friendship introduces dialogue, with the consequent silencing of the third-person narrative voice. Without this, the third-person narrator can create a feeling of distance. In both stories, the voice of the narrator is very limited because Cervantes leaves the characters themselves to tell the story directly. Thus, the storytelling flows naturally. This technique is very useful to give verisimilitude to the narration which was one of the literary concerns of the time and very much shared by Cervantes (Riley, 1962). Real-life dialogue is more direct and reliable than the manipulation that can be introduced by a single voice narrator who controls everything that is being said. For this reason, Cervantes avoids the single point of view and often introduces the friend:

For example, we do not hear from the narrator about Costanza. Instead, Avendaño and Carriazo hear two muleteers talking about her outside Illescas. Thus, Cervantes introduces the female protagonist of the story, stressing her fame at the same time as people are actually talking about her beauty outside in the streets.

The framework of two friends talking is the perfect parallel of the situation in which Cervantes as an author finds himself: he has to present his story in such a way that the reader is going to find it plausible, *verdadera*, in literary terms. This is what Campuzano is also doing. Cervantes could not have presented a better atmosphere of trust to reveal a secret. Peralta warns him not to tell anybody: 'Si ya no fuere a quien sea tan su amigo como yo' (III, 236). Cipión and Berganza are aware that their gift of speech is something out of the ordinary and therefore not something easy to accept as true. They then go on to talk about dogs being the symbol of loyalty. The two dogs embody friendship, trust and faithfulness. They are the best guarantor of truthfulness. As they are such intimate friends and characterised by their loyalty, the reader is led to believe what they are saying, as they are not going to deceive each other. Their friendship is the strongest reason for credibility. In consequence, the trust involved in a relationship of friendship is in itself a positive contribution to the effect of verisimilitude.

In the light of Ruth El Saffar's (1976) study of these *novelas*, one can perceive a parallel between this relationship of the two friends and that which is established between the author and the reader in a literary context. The author needs a reader, a



listener. Author and reader depend on each other: Peralta gives Campuzano a good meal and, in return, Campuzano entertains him by telling a story. Both relationships provide an enriching experience. Both friends benefit from the relationship, as well as the author and the reader in the act of reading.

The literary relationship between author and reader is further developed in the colloquy of the dogs. They are already friends, and due to the special circumstances in which they find themselves, they are ready to hear each other's life stories. The attitude of frankness is closely linked with a mutual desire to accept and believe what the teller is going to relate:

It is only when each one, the dog and the man, gives up pretense, when each thinks himself to be alone and yielded up to his particularity and contingency, when no pretenses are being made, when no efforts are being expended to please anyone else, that true communication takes place in the double *novela*. (El Saffar, 1976: 85)

In *El coloquio de los perros*, it is Berganza who takes the lead, encouraged by Cipión. Berganza is aware of literary principles which should rule a story and he often refers to them. Cipión helps in this task by interrupting Berganza when he breaks some of these principles. After some corrections, Berganza expresses his desire to hear Cipión's story because from the advice he is giving, Berganza imagines that he will be a master in story telling:

Que de quien tan bien sabe conocer y enmendar los defectos que tengo en contar los míos, bien se puede esperar que contará los suyos de manera que enseñen y deleiten a un mismo punto. (III, 251)

Through the interchange of dialogue between friends, Cervantes introduces literary criticism as he did in the dialogue between Don Quijote and the canónigo in *Don Quijote*. Thus, he highlights the importance of unity and variety, as the other literary principle of the time. There is a danger of introducing elements which are not relevant to the main story line: 'Quiero decir que la sigas de golpe, sin que la hagas que parezca pulpo, según la vas añadiendo colas' (III, 268). The dialogue between friends becomes the most appropriate medium for self-criticism:

The *Coloquio de los perros*, where Berganza narrates and makes critical comments, is the logical outcome of Cervantes's own capacity for simultaneous invention and self-criticism. (Riley, 1962: 29)

This parallelism with the literary creation is another manifestation of the power of friendship in creating action and in this case, in imitating the action of creating a work of literature:

*El coloquio de los perros* y su novela-prefacio, *El casamiento engañoso*, forman de esta manera un mundo literario autosuficiente y perfecto. Todos los

elementos primordiales de la realidad literaria están contenidos aquí, sin faltar uno: el autor, el texto, el lector, y el crítico. (Avalle-Arce, 1990: 596-97)

Besides friendship serving as a vehicle to foster the literary principle of verisimilitude and the balance between unity and variety, Cervantes is a good representative of his age in his taste for multiple perspectives. He enjoys presenting different points of view and giving a variety of interpretations to events which often lead to ambiguity.

The fact is that Cervantes, like many other important thinkers and writers of the Renaissance who were sensitive to the multiplicity and relativity of truth are found traditional modes of discourse, in their inflexibility, unsuited to their expressive needs, was very fond of paradoxical expression. (Forcione, 1982: 185)

Friendship is a relationship which can contribute greatly to achieving a fuller perception of reality as it provides an opportunity to give multiple perspectives on the same event:

Si seguimos por esta hilada pronto caemos en la cuenta de que la dualidad de protagonistas es una norma cervantina, impuesta, seguramente, por la necesidad de puntos de vista múltiples, o al menos doble. (Avalle-Arce, 1987: 35)

The case of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* is striking in this respect. At first sight it appears to be a picaresque novel but with the unusual feature of introducing two *pícaros* instead of one. Through their interaction the narrative is made more lively, but ultimately, the character that describes the world of Monipodio is Rinconete. In a way, there is only one perspective given to the reader. Nevertheless, half way through the story, Cortado is given the chance to give his opinion about the fact of stealing: '¿Qué tiene de malo? [...] ¿No es peor ser hereje o renegado?' to which Cortado clearly replies 'Todo es malo' (I, 236). He expresses the opposite view of what has been expressed so far. The pair of friends has been used to give a contrasting opinion. This can explain the reason why Cervantes has introduced two *pícaros* instead of one.

In *El casamiento engañoso* and *El coloquio de los perros*, Cervantes centres the attention on this point specifically and tries to present the difficulties of expressing truth in fiction. Cervantes develops the idea that with friendship and the dialogue and exchange of ideas which come from it, the single point of view can be avoided and consequently, the danger of distorting reality.

In *El casamiento engañoso* he shows how unreliable the narrator can be. The narrator gives only one perspective, which is deceptive. The dialogue would not take place without Peralta although he does not say very much. Campuzano tells the whole story without interruption until the end. The role of Peralta becomes more evident when, in his only interruption of the narrative, he demands an explanation of

a certain point and this leads Campuzano to reveal a completely different intention in his actions. Campuzano has just said that Estefanía had run away with his possessions and Peralta exclaims: 'Bien grande fue –dijo a esta sazón el licenciado Peralta- haberse llevado doña Estefanía tanta cadena y tanto cintillo' (III, 232), to which Campuzano replies unexpectedly: 'Ninguna pena me dio esa falta' (III, 232). Peralta, somehow puzzled, demands an explanation and Campuzano has to confess that he had also deceived Estefanía because his gold chain and all the other jewels were all fake. Campuzano has made the reader move towards condemning Estefanía for having deceived Campuzano. But, with Peralta's intervention, we discover that Campuzano was equally responsible and deceitful.

Throughout this portion of the narrative the reader tends to sympathize with the narrator-protagonist –until the other side of the deception is revealed, for Campuzano had led Estefanía on with a collection of paste jewels. [...] The reader has been deceived by the unilateral perspective of the narrator until the intervention of the listener (the Licenciado Peralta), whose perspective had corresponded to that of the reader. The listener intrudes and converts the narrative into a dialogue. In so doing, Peralta leads Campuzano to reveal his own deceitful role in the marriage and thereby changes the essence of the tale. (Weiger, 1988: 1)

This makes us aware of Campuzano's control of the narrative, which would have been absolute if it had not been for Peralta's alternative. Friendship is therefore a convincing tool to enable an alternative perspective to emerge. Edwin Williamson argues that Cervantes avoids imposing a didactic view, a single perspective, to the reader: 'If anything could be said to have irked Cervantes as a writer, it was the requirement and expectation that art should be overtly didactic' (1989: 105). The characters are unreliable and the reader has to decide for himself what perspective to believe. B.W. Ife (1982) places his discussion in the context of the decay of the popularity of romance. He says that Cervantes is interested in exploring what makes people believe in fiction.

In *El coloquio de los perros*, Cervantes gives more examples of this possibility of distortion when only one perspective is given. The danger is avoided because Cipión and Berganza have the power of speech, dialogue, and therefore of giving various perspectives: 'The dialogue format has been considered an ideal vehicle for the presentation of different points of view ever since Plato' (Weiger, 1988: 156).

As we can see from these considerations, a discussion on friendship in the *Novelas ejemplares* can illustrate the rich and manifold contribution which this aspect makes to the work as a whole. It serves as a vehicle to engage creatively with received thinking on an important aspect of human experience. Friendship allows for character development in the stories and presenting Cervantes's high regard for friends which goes as far back as classical myth and philosophy. From a literary perspective it is an instrument to pursue some of Cervantes's most characteristic

literary concerns such as protecting verisimilitude, achieving a balance between unity and variety, engaging with self-criticism and providing a variety of perspectives of the same events.

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